

THE  
RELATIONS  
OF THE  
BUSINESS MEN OF THE UNITED STATES  
TO THE  
NATIONAL LEGISLATION.

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BY  
HAMILTON ANDREWS HILL,  
SECRETARY OF THE BOSTON BOARD OF TRADE AND OF THE NATIONAL BOARD OF TRADE.

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## PREFATORY NOTE.


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THE following essay was prepared by invitation of the American Social Science Association to be read at its ninth general meeting just held in the city of Philadelphia. It is now printed for the perusal of the business men of the country, and especially of the members of the Boards of Trade and other commercial organizations, and to their careful consideration it is respectfully commended. From many of them, the writer has heard comments upon the course of our national legislation on commercial questions, similar to those which are here made; and it is his earnest hope that they and others will continue the discussion, and that, in the various constituencies, they will adopt such measures as their judgment may approve, to bring about the desired change.

It has been thought unnecessary to make any direct reference to legislation in the States, although to a considerable extent no doubt, this is open to the same kind of criticism as is that of the National Congress, and calls for a similar remedy. So far as the parallel exists, the applicability to the various State Legislatures, of what has been said about the state of things at Washington, will readily suggest itself to the reader.

Boston, October 29th, 1870.

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WHILE the spirit of class, like the spirit of sectionalism, in certain of its manifestations, ought always to be discouraged and condemned, there can be no question that every class in a nation, like every section of a country, has peculiar interests of its own, which, unless it shall concern itself about them, will probably fail to receive proper consideration, and that it has also duties to perform to the State, growing out of its own conditions and relations, which cannot be misunderstood or neglected by it without public loss.

For the purposes of the present discussion, the people of the United States may be divided into four classes, the professional, the agricultural, the mechanical and the commercial. We have no non-industrial class among us; we are all workers, either of necessity or by choice, and almost every man may be appropriately assigned to one or another of the groups mentioned.

In the professional class, we should include all those who study, practice or teach in the departments of divinity, medicine, or law, or in the arts and sciences, also all other literary men and educators, and all who belong to the army or navy; in the agricultural class, those who devote themselves to the cultivation of the soil; in the mechanical class, all artisans and artificers; and in the commercial class, all who are engaged in the manufacture, transportation, or distribution of commodities, or in the regulation and control of money and credit, which lie at the foundation of all mercantile exchange. It is to the

last of these that we propose to invite attention in this paper, and an inquiry will be raised as to the relations which the commercial class sustains to the community as a whole, the extent of the dependence under which it rests, on national legislation, and the degree to which it ought to participate, first in its own interest, but secondly and especially in the interest of the nation, in framing this legislation.

In inviting the American Social Science Association to engage in such a discussion as is thus indicated, it may be opportune to recall the circumstance that the Association of Chambers of Commerce of Great Britain, comprising within its membership nearly all the influential commercial bodies of that country, was brought into existence as the consequence of a suggestion made by the presiding officer of the Social Science Congress at its Bradford meeting ten or eleven years ago. It may safely be affirmed that if any suggestions shall emanate from the American Social Science Association, which may serve to quicken the activity or to widen the influence of the business men of the United States, and of their local and national Chambers, they will be cordially welcomed and carefully considered.

Let us inquire more particularly concerning the commercial class as we have designated it. It embraces all manufacturers, miners, importers, wholesale and retail dealers, ship owners, managers of transportation lines by land or by water, railroad proprietors and officials, capitalists, bankers and brokers, and all employed by them. Its importance numerically should not be overlooked. The present population of the United States is about forty millions of souls; it is estimated that of this number thirty-three per cent., or upwards of thirteen millions, are in receipt of an income, and eleven millions add directly by their labor to the wealth of the country. These eleven millions

may be sub-divided with approximate accuracy as follows: agriculturists, six and a half millions, mechanics, one million, laborers, one million and a half, and the commercial class as already defined, two millions, or eighteen per cent. of the whole.

But this statement falls far short of illustrating the relative importance of the class under consideration, as we shall see if we glance at the nature and scope of its operations. It keeps afloat four millions of tons of shipping under the American flag, employed on the inland waters of the country, along the coasts and upon the ocean. It has built fifty thousand miles of railway, over which forty-eight millions of tons of merchandise pass annually, not including coal. It has constructed one hundred and twenty-five thousand miles of telegraph lines at a cost of nine millions of dollars. It controls the export and import of merchandise valued for the last year at nine hundred millions of dollars. It produces from the spindles, looms, forges and benches of our numberless manufacturing establishments the value of from five to six hundred millions of dollars a year. It directs the operations of sixteen hundred banks scattered all over the country, the paid-up capital of which is four hundred millions of dollars, and the resources of which amount to a billion and a half. But this is not all. The industry of the mechanic and laboring classes relies largely if not mainly on our merchants, manufacturers and capitalists; while the entire product of our national agriculture, valued at more than three billions of dollars, enters the domain of commerce almost immediately after its in-gathering, and is altogether dependent on the commercial class for the money which enables it to be brought to the home market or shipped abroad, no less than for the vessels or railways by which it is conveyed, or for the elevators or warehouses in which it is stored. In a word, the total product of the industry of the people of the United States, estimated for last year at six

billions, eight hundred and twenty-five millions of dollars, does no more than measure the scope and extent of the influence exerted by business men in one way or another, directly or remotely, sooner or later, on the material prosperity and development of the nation.

“The merchants of a country,” says Lord BACON, “are *vena porta*, and if they flourish not, a kingdom may have good limbs, but will have empty veins, and nourish little.” Is not this emphatically true among ourselves in the United States?

We need hardly stop to explain how closely dependent these commercial and other related interests are upon the national legislation for their welfare and security. It is true that no legislation however hostile, could annihilate the vast annual product of our industry. Our business men have often prospered in the past in spite of Acts of Congress, and they will probably do the same in frequent instances in the future. Legislation has not made this nation what it is, commercially or otherwise; and legislation will never unmake it. At the same time, it may do, and, as we know, has at various periods done much to quicken or to retard commercial progress; to encourage, or to embarrass the efforts of business men; to give confidence to, or to frighten capital. Sometimes it is negative, sometimes positive in its character, but in all cases it will be potential in its effect for good or for evil. If under given circumstances, no legislation is what is required, as when the merchants of France in reply to a question from LOUIS XIV, as to what he could do for them, said, “Let us alone:” then, any interference whatever will only work mischief. On the other hand, if the fostering care of the government is needed permanently or temporarily by a particular branch of industry, then to fail to legislate in its behalf, will prove mischievous, and to fail to legislate intelligently and judiciously, may be hardly less hurtful. If also, in the progress of affairs, it becomes

necessary to change a long established policy in relation to some one or more branches of commercial enterprise, then, to adhere tenaciously to legislation once justifiable but now obsolete, is sure to be injurious, and in particular instances may prove fatal.

Who can estimate the extent to which our domestic exchanges are influenced by the action of Congress from time to time, on the subject of the currency? The exchangeable value of the billions of our annual products, may be determined in one direction or the other, by the adoption of a particular policy of expansion or of contraction. The consequences of a serious error in finance at Washington, will in the process of time be felt in every bank, every warehouse, and every village store, and in every farm-house in the United States; and this being so, how many of our population will escape from them? Upon our tariff legislation, whether in its provisions it be stable or fluctuating, simple or complex, moderate or prohibitory, depend for both the method and the extent of their increase, our multiform manufactures in leather, iron, cotton, wool, wood and other materials. Our established position as a competing maritime power upon the oceans of the globe, the traffic on which is regulated by unchanging and universal principles and not by municipal rules, must always be decided in the long run by the degree of harmony which we succeed in securing between what we call our navigation laws and those principles. Questions are arising in reference to internal improvements, the relation of the General Government to them, their amenability to national control, and their right to claim the aid of the national treasury, and upon the manner in which these questions are answered, the permanent efficiency of the transportation service of the country hinges.

There can be no doubt that from this time forward, it will be incumbent upon Congress to devote its time and thought chiefly

to the material interests of the nation. Fortunately we are so completely isolated from the other great powers by our geographical position, that we need not involve ourselves in their misunderstandings, jealousies and quarrels. Still more fortunately, our own internal dissensions upon subjects purely political and governmental, have so far abated that we may hope soon to see substantial and practical accord upon them among all intelligent and patriotic citizens. What remains for us then, but to set ourselves diligently to the solution of the problems bearing upon the development of the national resources? This is now the duty of the people, and it is especially the duty to which Congress is called, in order that the national wealth may be increased in every direction, and to the utmost possible extent. Nor is this an unworthy or sordid end, if properly understood. What is a rich nation? Assuredly, not of necessity a nation in which there are numerous instances of large personal accumulation or acquisition. A nation may contain many very wealthy men and yet be poor; it may contain very few, and yet be rich. To entitle it to be called rich it must possess large aggregated wealth, and the more equally this is diffused among all classes of its population, the greater its prosperity. We want to raise the general standard among ourselves, of comfort, of intelligence and of morality to the highest practicable point; and to secure for the millions of our fellow citizens, native or adopted, now dwelling on this continent, and for the millions more who will inevitably come hither, whether we desire it or not, (perhaps in greater crowds than ever before,) opportunity for labor according to individual fitness or preference, adequate remuneration and the possibilities of home. Who shall say that this purpose is not worthy of the choice and devotion of every American citizen, whether he be in private or in public life? Grandeur than any epitaph carved on the tomb of military conqueror or hero, is the inscription on

a monument raised to commemorate the public services of one of England's greatest and purest statesmen: He gave the people bread.

We have endeavored to show the extent and value of the material interests represented by what we have termed the commercial class of our country, the importance of these interests to the entire population and to the national prosperity, and the manner in which they may be affected, favorably or adversely, by legislation. We have said also that it has become the duty of Congress to direct its thought and attention chiefly to their protection and promotion. It is proper now to inquire concerning the adaptation of Congress as at present constituted, for sustaining the responsibilities, and for performing the services which all this implies.

At the time of the adoption of the Federal Constitution, it seems to have been anticipated that the representative body would be composed of "land holders, merchants, and men of the learned professions," and the opinion was expressed that "there was no danger that the interests and feelings of the different classes of citizens would not be understood and attended to by these three descriptions of men." But it could hardly have been foreseen that a branch of one of these classes, a single one of the learned professions, would attain so large a preponderance in numbers and influence over all others, as we find that it has done. We refer of course to the profession of the law. In the Senate of the United States at the present time, out of seventy-two members, forty-four, or sixty-one per cent. are members of the bar, while nine only, or twelve and one-half per cent. are connected with trade, transportation or finance. The proportion is precisely the same in the House of Representatives, in which out of two hundred and thirty-eight members, one hundred and forty-six are lawyers, and thirty-one are members of the commercial class in its broadest

definition.\* It would be a liberal estimate to state the number of lawyers in the country in 1870 at forty thousand; the number, according to the census, in 1860, was thirty-three thousand one hundred and ninety-three. Assuming it to be forty thousand now, the profession of the law contains one-tenth of one per cent. of the population, while its representation in the National Legislature equals as we have seen, sixty-one per cent. At the same time the commercial class comprising within itself eighteen per cent. of all those who add directly to the wealth of the country by their industry, and five per cent. of the entire population, has a representation in Congress of only thirteen per cent. DE TOCQUEVILLE said, thirty or forty years ago:

“If I were asked where I placed the American aristocracy, I should reply without hesitation, that it is not composed of the rich, who are united together by no common tie, but that it occupies the judicial bench and the bar.”

And again :

“The lawyers of the United States, form a party which is but little feared and scarcely perceived, which has no badge peculiar to itself, which adapts itself with great flexibility to the exigencies of the

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\*From the second edition of the *Congressional Directory*, we have compiled the following table, showing the occupation of the various members of the Forty-first Congress :

	SENATE.	HOUSE.	TOTAL.
Lawyers.....	44	146	190
Merchants.....	9	31	40
Editors.....	5	11	16
Planters and Farmers.....	5	18	23
Clergymen.....	1	1	2
Soldiers.....	2	1	3
Teachers.....	1	2	3
Physicians.....		2	2
Miscellaneous.....	5	26	31
	<hr/> 72	<hr/> 238	<hr/> 310

time, and accommodates itself to all the movements of the social body; but this party extends over the whole community, and it penetrates into all classes of society; it acts upon the country imperceptibly, but it finally fashions it to suit its purposes."

We will not pause to consider the statement of the distinguished writer from whose work on Democracy in America we have quoted, that the influence exerted by members of the legal profession is the most powerful existing security against the excesses of democracy; for we are now inquiring concerning them as a legislating rather than as a ruling class. The considerations presented by this author, however, to account for their social and political influence, will illustrate, with slight modifications, the reason why they have become the dominant class in legislation:

"Men who have more especially devoted themselves to legal pursuits, derive from those occupations certain habits of order, a taste for formalities, and a kind of instinctive regard for the regular connection of ideas, which naturally render them very hostile to the revolutionary spirit and the unreflecting passions of the multitude.

"The special information which lawyers derive from their studies, ensures them a separate station in society; and they constitute a sort of privileged body in the scale of intelligence. This notion of their superiority perpetually recurs to them in the practice of their profession; they are the masters of a science which is necessary, but which is not very generally known; they serve as arbiters between the citizens; and the habit of directing the blind passions of parties in litigation to their purpose, inspires them with a certain contempt for the judgment of the multitude. To this it may be added, that they naturally constitute *a body*; not by any previous understanding, or by an agreement which directs them to a common end; but the analogy of their studies and the uniformity of their proceedings connect their minds together, as much as a common interest would combine their endeavors."

We have no disposition to call in question the peculiar fitness of able and experienced practitioners at the bar, in view of the

special training received by them during preparation for and in the practice of their profession, for participation in the duties of legislative bodies ; nor will we raise an issue as to the relative rank among their legal brethren, of members of Congress who are lawyers, although we have sometimes heard from that source sharp criticisms in reference to both their professional and their general standing. Carefully avoiding all personal allusions and reflections in the course of what we have to say, we will admit that these men, as a whole, fairly represent the average respectability and learning of their class. But we cannot concede that legal studies and attainments are the sole or chief qualification for legislative service, or that any sound argument can be deduced from their possession to prove that it is desirable that lawyers should be so largely in the majority in Congress as for many years past they have been and as they now are.

However well qualified lawyers may be by training and experience to deal with general principles, they must often lack that practical knowledge of affairs, which is essential to the right and opportune application of principles, and to the working out of details in commercial legislation. They are obliged therefore, to rely upon others for much of the information which they require, and if they have to go for this beyond the limits of their own body, they obtain their knowledge under many disadvantages. Hence, in part, the reason why Congress has been so slow as the commercial class feel that it has been, to deal with some of the problems growing out of the war of the rebellion. Few of its members, comparatively, possessing any practical knowledge of business, the majority have been compelled in various ways to solicit expressions of opinion promiscuously from individuals or corporations in their constituencies, and these expressions have been so various and so contradictory, given from so many different view-points, and

prompted by such conflicting motives, that Congress, having no convictions of its own, well defined and matured, intelligently formed and confidently held, has been unable to unite upon a commercial or financial policy calculated to meet the approval of the country or to relieve the embarrassments under which various interests are now suffering.

We cannot, however, treat our subject properly without looking at Congress, as at present constituted, in another aspect. We have spoken of it as containing lawyers and men of business in certain proportions to the entire membership. Another class is represented in it, which we shall find to be still more numerous and more all-controlling even than the legal profession; we mean the politicians. The census returns do not indicate how many politicians there are in the United States, but it may safely be assumed that the aggregate would not vary very widely from the given total of all the male population who have come to years of understanding, *plus* an unknown quantity representing a number undetermined but evidently on the increase, among the other sex. If all who talk politics and who feel personally interested in them, ought to be represented in that capacity at Washington, perhaps, in one view, Congress may be said to be properly constituted. But there is a difference of opinion among our people, as to what politics are and wherein political duties consist. There are some who define politics as consisting in the knowledge or the practice of conducting the various affairs of a state or nation, as the science of government; and, as patriotic men and women, they feel that they ought to concern themselves about every question relating to the management of public affairs, and bearing upon the safety, honor and prosperity of the nation. Nothing could be more noble than this, and it is greatly to be regretted that the word politics should have come to signify among us anything different or less worthy. But, unfortunately, there are those who under-

stand by it the views, the measures and the policies of political parties, and who confound political intelligence and activity with partisan shrewdness and zeal. We will not undertake to say precisely how many of the three hundred and ten senators and representatives at Washington are politicians in this latter sense ; but there are altogether too many such, rightly to represent the people at large, and too many for the public good. We believe that our citizens generally, certainly the more intelligent and pure minded, regard party organization as machinery which it is convenient to employ in carrying forward national affairs, but which after all is machinery only, and therefore of subordinate and subsidiary value. As man is worth more than all institutions, so the Government is worth more than any or all parties. This is too apt to be forgotten by those who have in charge the regulation of party affairs, and the promotion of party ends ; and we greatly fear that it is forgotten by many of our public men, members of Congress not excepted. In this, as we judge, the most alarming element in the character of Congress, as it exists to-day, is to be seen. We have more to apprehend from the predominance there of the politicians than of the lawyers. Were the two Houses composed entirely of lawyers, supposing them to be men of ideas and convictions, men of high personal character and of repute in their profession, men of pure motives and unselfish aims, thoughtful not so much of themselves or of their party as of their country ; undesirable as this would be, we hesitate not to say, that the general interests of trade and commerce would be immeasurably safer than if Congress were filled with business men, chosen, not as such, but as party politicians to promote party interests, and to struggle only for party supremacy. The most dangerous men among us are those office-holders, whether lawyers or merchants, who are politicians in the worst use of the word, because all such lower the standard of qualification for public service, and

generally misapprehend and undervalue the true interests of the people. Such men too, are often, if not necessarily, corrupt ; and if in an official capacity they are brought at length to take up questions of pressing commercial importance, they are likely to do this from unworthy motives, and, feeling no deep sympathy for the cause in behalf of which they are called to legislate, they will probably content themselves with temporary, superficial and half-way measures. Hence perhaps the chief reason why there is so much difficulty in securing wise legislation in behalf of interests which are vital to the best and broadest prosperity of the country, but which do not appear to be demanded by party considerations or to be necessary to party success. It is true, they may affect more or less directly two millions of people, and indirectly the entire population ; but their importance being unappreciated by those who control the party organizations, and their requirements being matters of business rather than of sentiment, they fail to awaken any wide-spread enthusiasm, they suggest no popular watchwords or party cries, and they are therefore laid aside or hurried over for subjects out of which more political capital may be made, and upon which more exciting harangues may be delivered.

It is to a Congress thus comprising professional men not versed in the practical details of business, and politicians too often indifferent to these subjects, that the merchants of the country are obliged to have recourse for legislation in reference to our material interests. As has been intimated, the late civil war disturbed in various ways the course of our domestic and our foreign commerce. Political reconstruction having been secured, our business men now desire a careful review and readjustment of all the legislation of the last ten years relating to general business and finance, in order that the conditions of trade may be restored as fully and as rapidly as practicable to the *status quo ante bellum*. They desire also a thorough exami-

nation of our navigation laws and other commercial statutes enacted in years long past, for the purpose of ascertaining whether in any essential particulars modifications are needed to make them conformable to changes which have taken place in our own circumstances, or in those of other nations. More than this, they ask that a commercial policy be devised and adopted, which shall be broad, flexible, liberal and comprehensive, free from all suspicion of sectionalism, recognized in its essential principles by both political parties, and worthy of transmission from one administration to another. But how shall Congress be brought to understand and to sympathize with the commercial class in these desires? Our merchants cannot explain all their views by correspondence; and if they visit Washington for the purpose, they find themselves in corridors crowded with office seekers, with men having personal and selfish schemes to promote, and with professed lobbyists, or they chafe in ante-rooms as did Dr. JOHNSON when waiting to see Lord CHESTERFIELD. If they obtain admission to the committee-rooms, they find the members pre-occupied and pressed for time, and they have to explain themselves briefly and hurriedly; their motives are liable to misconception; and they are often treated with indifference, sometimes with positive rudeness. Is it strange then, that they decline to place themselves in a position at once so thankless and so unpleasant?

For this state of things what remedy shall we propose? How shall Congress as a body be brought rightly to understand the financial and commercial wants of the nation, and wisely and adequately to legislate in view of these wants? Answering this question generally, we should say that we must be more rigid and exacting in the selection of candidates, putting forward only men of recognized character, ability and experience, and choosing only those who are both competent and willing to be the leaders of public opinion, and who will have sufficient

confidence in themselves and sufficient independence to initiate measures of reform, instead of waiting until the nation, after a long and patient endurance of evils, can be aroused to unite in demanding their removal. Our subject however requires us to be more explicit than this, and it suggests the nature of the specific fitness which must be insisted on certainly in a fair proportion of those who are to constitute the Houses of Congress. It teaches us that we must send a larger number of thoroughly-trained, first-class, business men to Congress, and especially to the lower branch, than we have of late been in the habit of doing. If it be true, as has been stated, that from henceforth the paramount duty of Congress will largely be to pass upon questions relating to finance, the tariff, ocean commerce, railway transportation and kindred topics, the most natural course to pursue to insure proper action thereupon would seem to be to elect to seats in Congress, bankers, manufacturers, merchants and railroad officials. Far better to introduce the practical knowledge and experience of such men into the body itself, than to attempt to infuse into it any information by means of written communications or hearings before committees. If the condition of a bank, or a factory, or a railway become embarrassed, it is customary in the commercial world to select some man especially skilled in the banking, manufacturing or railway business, as the case may be, to retrieve if possible the position of the failing institution, or, if there must be disaster, to make this as light as possible. Under such circumstances no one would think of selecting a man to stand at the head of a corporation who could bring no practical knowledge to the performance of his duties, and whose only claim to such a position was based on a legal education or good standing in a political party. And yet we are in a measure entrusting the welfare of sixteen hundred banks to men to whom we would not confide the management of any one of them. We are placing the well-being of our whole

manufacturing system in the hands of men whom we would not put in charge of a single mill. We are sending men to frame our navigation policy, whose advice we would not accept in reference to the model of a ship, or the merits of a sea captain or mate. We are charging men with the transportation interests of a continent, who would be utterly incompetent to manage one of our shortest railway lines. Of course we shall not be understood as urging that every legislator should possess in himself the requisite qualifications for each one of the positions to which we have referred; that would be absurd. Nor can anything we have said be construed as intimating that every legislator should be competent to fill some one or other of them. We do not desire to see the Halls of Congress occupied exclusively by the commercial class; we would simply recur to the original idea of the framers of the Constitution, which was, as we have said, that the representative body should consist in the right proportions of members of the learned professions, business men and land-holders or agriculturists. We expect that in Congress, as well as in other legislative assemblies, there will always be a large number of lawyers, and we shall be content to have it so, if only the best men at the bar are chosen; but we claim that side by side with them should sit merchants and other members of the commercial class, and in about equal numbers. There ought to be not less than one hundred of these men in the House of Representatives to-day. All the large cities of the Union should, in part at least, be represented by them. They should be selected not because they are party politicians, and are therefore available, their occupation as business men being the accident or incident; but, distinctly for the reason that they are business men and not partisans at all. The influence for good of such a body of men in rightly moulding and shaping our commercial legislation, it would be impossible to estimate.

Since the passage of the English Reform Bill in 1832, the House of Commons has been the true governing power in Great Britain ; and the governing power in the House of Commons, in everything relating especially to trade and commerce, but by no means to these subjects alone, is just such a body of practical men as we have alluded to, bankers, merchants, and manufacturers, who sit for London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Huddersfield, and other large manufacturing and commercial towns, and who, differing more or less on political matters, are substantially agreed among themselves in reference to the general commercial policy of the nation. Before the passage of the Reform Bill, these important communities were altogether overshadowed in the Government by the landed interest and by the "great families." Many of them, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, and others, were not represented in the House of Commons at all.\* But, as soon as the representation was enlarged, the electors of the places referred to sagaciously returned prominent and successful business men to look after their interests and the interests of the country, in Parliament, and they, in connection with many honored members of the legal profession and of the aristocracy, have carried through all the reforms of the last thirty years, and have contributed more than any others in modern times to make England what it is. For the Reform Bill was simply the key to all the great measures, which, subsequently to its passage, have triumphed in Great Britain. In the language of the *Historian of the Peace*, the people made up their minds "that the shortest and only safe way of procuring all reforms and all good government was by making the representation as true as it could be made." This rendered it possible for RICHARD

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\*Manchester and Leeds were represented in Parliament for a short time under the Protectorate.

COBDEN, and others like him, to enter the House of Commons, and for JOHN BRIGHT to occupy a seat in the Cabinet. And now, as we are informed, from one-third to one-half of the present members of the House of Commons are directly connected with trade, and the number is constantly increasing. The same element is beginning to enter into the composition of the House of Peers. Lord BELPER, better known perhaps as Mr. STRUTT, is a great manufacturer at Derby; Lord OVERSTONE is Mr. JONES LLOYD the banker; Lord DUDLEY is one of the largest iron masters in the country, and the Marquis of SALISBURY is surpassed by few in his practical knowledge of railways. Nearly one-half the members of the present government are connected with business, either personally or by descent. Mr. GLADSTONE, the premier, is the son of a merchant; Mr. FORSTER is a manufacturer of stuff goods; Mr. BRIGHT of carpets; and Mr. BAXTER of coarse linens; Mr. GOSCHEN is a banker, and Mr. BRUCE a proprietor of mines. The Duke of ARGYLL, also a cabinet minister, has placed two of his sons in clerkships, one in a banking-house, and the other with a mercantile firm in the China trade; and, if it be true, as reported in the papers, that his eldest son and heir is about to marry one of the princesses of the Royal Family, it is not impossible that a few years hence a sister of the King of England will have one or more brothers-in-law participating actively in business affairs. All this illustrates the controlling influence which the commercial classes have already attained, and of which we see practical results, in the perfection which has been reached in the administration of the Post-office, the occupancy of every ocean in the two hemispheres with steamship lines, the efficiency of the railway service, the extension of telegraphic facilities, and other advantages which have proved of incalculable advantage to all classes of the people of Great Britain, and have so greatly stimulated both their home and their foreign trade. We might

go further, if our limits permitted, and speak of the power which these business men wield in the solution of the social problems of the day, in ecclesiastical reform and in foreign affairs. Certain English writers, accomplished and fastidious, schoolmen rather than men of the world, affect to lament this state of things, and speak almost as if England were going to ruin under this domination of the commercial class; but we who from this side of the Atlantic watch passing events there, can hardly fail to estimate the value of the influence exerted and of the service performed by its representatives, and we anticipate still more marked and beneficent results from their common sense method of investigating, and their practical way of handling almost every question upon which they are called to legislate, whether of political economy, social science, or diplomacy.

We have a condition of affairs in the United States somewhat analogous to that existing in Great Britain before the passage of the Reform Bill; and if what has been stated in this paper is correct, there is something seriously defective in our system of representation, not indeed because there is anything wrong in the Constitution, but as the result of long usage and repeated default. For the landed aristocracy, we have the legal profession and party politicians; for the rotten borough—Gatton or Old Sarum—we have the caucus\* and the ring; for personal and family nomination, we have nomination by irresponsible committees and by cliques. Is it not true that our leading commercial communities are exerting little if any more influence

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\* If to any one, we should seem to speak with undue disrespect of this institution of our country, we would shelter ourselves behind a name which is its own sufficient authority wherever it is known. WHITTIER in his poem entitled *The Panorama*, describes a slave auctioneer in part as follows:

A Squire or Colonel, in his pride of place,  
Known at free fights, *the caucus* and the race.

at the Federal Capital, than did Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds in the House of Commons forty years ago? Lord GREY said, "representation, not nomination, is the principle of the Reform Bill," and this we think illustrates the precise character of the change which we in our turn shall be required to make. We must secure a fair and proper representation of all the great national interests in the Halls of Congress, and, as a means to this, a wise selection of truly representative men to serve us there. Our brethren in England have reached their present parliamentary position through a conflict which, during its continuance shook their governmental fabric to its foundation. "With a great price" obtained they their freedom; but we are "freeborn." It is not our Constitution, but ourselves, that we need to reform; it is not our laws, but our method of procedure under them, which we must amend. If the object to be attained be worthy, we can hardly shrink from the effort which will place it within our reach.

Three inquiries present themselves here, suggesting some of the difficulties to be overcome; and, in replying to them, we shall endeavor to develop the course, which in our judgment should be taken to reform our Congressional representation: How can we secure the election of a proper number of commercial men of the right kind? How can we obtain the consent of such men to serve? How shall we guard against the choice of men who being actively engaged in business, will yield to the temptation to use their legislative position to promote their personal gain?

How can we secure the election to Congress of a proper number of commercial men of the right kind? We have said that in our opinion there ought to be one hundred of them in the House of Representatives to-day, sitting for the great commercial constituencies. How can they be placed there? This is a matter in reference to which the business men of these

constituencies must bestir themselves ; they may not be really more deeply interested in the character of the legislation enacted at Washington on subjects relating to the material welfare of the country, than are men in other walks of life, but they are so apparently, and the majority of their fellow-citizens believe them to be so in fact. With them therefore rests the responsibility of taking the first steps in the direction of reform. That they have the power to carry the point there can be little doubt, if they will use proper means. Numerically, as we have seen, they are not weak. We have estimated the commercial class in the United States, employers and employed inclusive, to be eighteen per cent. of the total of real producers ; it is of course the strongest proportionately, in the communities in which it is proposed that its influence for reform shall be exerted. But it possesses another element of strength, it holds the purse-strings which it is necessary to untie at the commencement of every political canvass. Nearly all the money raised in the cities for party purposes is contributed by business men and capitalists, and it would be quite legitimate for them not only to insist, when making their subscriptions, upon a due recognition of their class in the nominations to be presented to the people, but also, if their just claims and reasonable expectations fail to be met, to quietly allow those who thus overrule their preferences, with their supporters, to pay all the election bills. Their moral power however, would be their greatest source of strength ; they would be heartily sustained by the best men in the learned professions, and by thoughtful citizens of every class. A movement to obtain proper representation in Congress for the monetary, manufacturing, importing and transportation interests, would be seen to be so just in itself, and so desirable for the country at large, that it would receive prompt and hearty approval and coöperation on every hand.

The local Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce are educating business men for legislative service, and they are beginning to create a public sentiment which will sustain them in this service when they shall enter upon it. They cannot be safely used in their character of commercial organizations, for making nominations or carrying elections, but they will be found to be of much use indirectly. The individual members know each other, understand each other, and estimate each other, generally at about the right value. Their acquaintanceship, and their habit heretofore of consulting and working together have prepared the way for further concert of action, so that outside of their organizations, but closely related to them, they are in a situation to form in every large business community a nucleus for a movement in favor of representative reform, which, with proper effort, will rapidly grow and finally prevail. The present time is favorable for commencing such a movement. The issues between the two political parties are less sharply defined than they have been for many years, and there seems to be a growing disposition on the part of moderate men on both sides to work together. If, therefore, the members of the Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce will informally meet each other for consultation, manifesting a conciliatory and unselfish spirit, and subordinating all personal and party preferences to the public good, if they will agree among themselves in reference to the man or men who are best fitted to act upon commercial questions in Congress, and if they will firmly insist upon the nomination of such, and of such only, it will not be long before their expressed wishes will be regarded, and they will have the satisfaction of seeing themselves, their class and the enterprise and industry of the country fairly represented and properly cared for. They will not accomplish their purpose all at once; it will be less difficult to succeed in some constituencies than

in others, but every additional commercial man sent to Washington will make it the more easy to elect others.

This brings us to the second inquiry : How can we obtain the consent of the men whom we wish to nominate and elect ? We admit that this is a more serious difficulty than that which we have just been treating ; for with the acceptance of a nomination by an unexceptionable candidate in any commercial constituency in which the business men are earnest and united, the battle will be more than half won. But the trouble is, the men upon whom we should all be likely to agree, would generally be those who would most hesitate to enter Congress. In the first place, with many of them going there would involve some pecuniary sacrifice ; they would have to leave their business affairs altogether for months at a time, and they would have to divide their attention between their public and private duties, even when at home. Still, we think, that under certain circumstances, enough of such men could be induced to forego personal advantage, at the solicitation of their brother merchants supported by their fellow citizens generally, to represent the more important constituencies. There is such a thing as disinterestedness in the world, and there is a proper ambition in the heart of many a high-toned man which will prompt him to serve his country when called to do so by the unsought suffrages of his associates, and when there seems to be a probability that his efforts will be appreciated, and in a measure successful ; one or both of these considerations might be expected to influence favorably those whom we should ask to represent the commercial class in the national councils. We know that our most experienced and successful business men are constantly induced to accept new responsibilities, from which they would gladly excuse themselves, were it not for what they conceive to be their duty to their friends or to the public. It is hard to have to believe that convictions of what the necessities of the country require,

confirmed by a knowledge of what is desirable for local interests also, will not induce men to make a temporary sacrifice for the sake of the results which they may hope thereby to achieve. But there is a lower ground on which an argument might be based, and it ought to be mentioned, although let us hope that it would not be necessary to make use of it in urging upon business men their duty to take part in legislative affairs. They have a very direct personal and pecuniary concern in the character of the legislation of the country; the value of their property, the nature of their operations, the extent of their profits, all depend upon the laws which are passed relating to internal taxation, the tariff and the currency. They may suppose that by their own prudence they can protect themselves personally, no matter how widely the course of legislation may be at variance with the general welfare, but in this they will find themselves mistaken sooner or later, for they cannot permanently escape from the effect of embarrassments and disabilities, involving both the class of which they are members and the country of which they are citizens.

There are other reasons however, why many of our best merchants would at the present time refuse to allow their names to be used as candidates for Congress. They would not feel at their ease in an assembly composed mainly of professional men, or of politicians. To obtain their consent, it would be necessary to assure them that they would not stand alone, that they would not be in a hopeless minority, and that the subjects especially represented by them would not be treated as of secondary importance. Above all, they would have to be relieved from the annoyances connected with the distribution of patronage, and from the drudgery of party work. Even professed politicians begin to find this a burden too heavy to be borne; and merchants, of the character indispensable to such a representation as we now plead for, will never willingly assume

it. If some comprehensive measure of civil service reform shall be enacted, the most serious impediment will be removed to our obtaining the consent of just such men as the country now needs, to serve not as party leaders but as legislators and practical statesmen.

A third inquiry awaits our reply: How can we guard against the use of their position in Congress by business men, to promote their personal gain? This question might as well be proposed whenever a man is to be chosen to take the presidency of a bank or to be placed at the head of a railway or manufacturing corporation. There is always danger in connection with every important appointment; and how is it avoided? By electing to these offices men of probity, standing and long-trying character, who value their good name and their high standing on 'Change as worth more than bags of gold. There are hundreds of such men in the United States, administering large trusts honestly and well; and having proved faithful in that which is less, they would not probably be false in that which is greater. Moreover it is usually considered a pledge and guarantee of good administration, when the head of a corporation is pecuniarily interested in its success; and everything else being equal, the soundest and safest legislation on commercial and financial questions, might be expected from those who themselves have the most at stake in the prosperity of the country. It is true that a man sometimes enriches himself at the expense of a company in which he is a large stockholder, and a legislator may make a corrupt use of his place for the benefit of himself or of his associates; but cases like these must be left to be dealt with as they arise. We do not know that a respectable merchant would be more likely to yield to this kind of temptation than a lawyer or a politician; but whenever a commercial member of Congress shall be found to devote himself to his own interests, or too exclusively to the interests of the district where he lives,

or the branch of business to which he belongs, forgetting that while sent to Congress to represent his own constituency, he is sent there to legislate for the whole people, the public sentiment of the country will not tolerate him for any length of time, and a moral pressure will be brought to bear which will compel the electors of his locality to choose a purer and a better man.

Believing, in the words of Miss MARTINEAU, already quoted, that the shortest way to reform and to all good government, is to make the representation as true as possible; we have endeavored in the foregoing pages to show that an essential change is called for in the composition of our national legislature, and to suggest how this change may be brought to pass. Our object has been not so much to secure justice for a class, the claims of which have been too long neglected, although such a purpose would call for no apology; nor exclusively to advance the material wealth of the nation by appropriate legislation, although the desirableness of this it would be difficult to over-estimate. But such a body of business men as we desire to see upon the floor of Congress would do more than shape financial and commercial legislation; they would prove themselves competent to deal with the various social and political questions which would come before them, and especially they would give powerful support to every wise measure of reform. They would closely scrutinize the expenses of the Government; and they would be unsparing in their treatment of all abuses. They would be as unwilling to accept perquisites as to wield patronage; they would therefore speedily abolish the franking privilege, and they would seek to redeem the civil service from the contaminating contact of party politics. Under their influence also, it might be anticipated that a change for the better would be introduced into the method of conducting congressional business. They would legislate not

altogether on theory, but in view of the pressing necessities of the time ; they would frame fewer laws perhaps, but this might be no calamity, seeing that often it is the duty of the legislator not so much to make laws as to bring to light those which inhere in the nature of things. Fewer long speeches would be made than at present, and fewer still would be printed ; but more work would be done, and in a shorter time. In a word these men would insist upon an honest, economical, intelligent and faithful administration of the Government in all its branches ; and they would infuse into all, somewhat of the vitality and efficiency which characterize their own warehouses and counting-rooms.

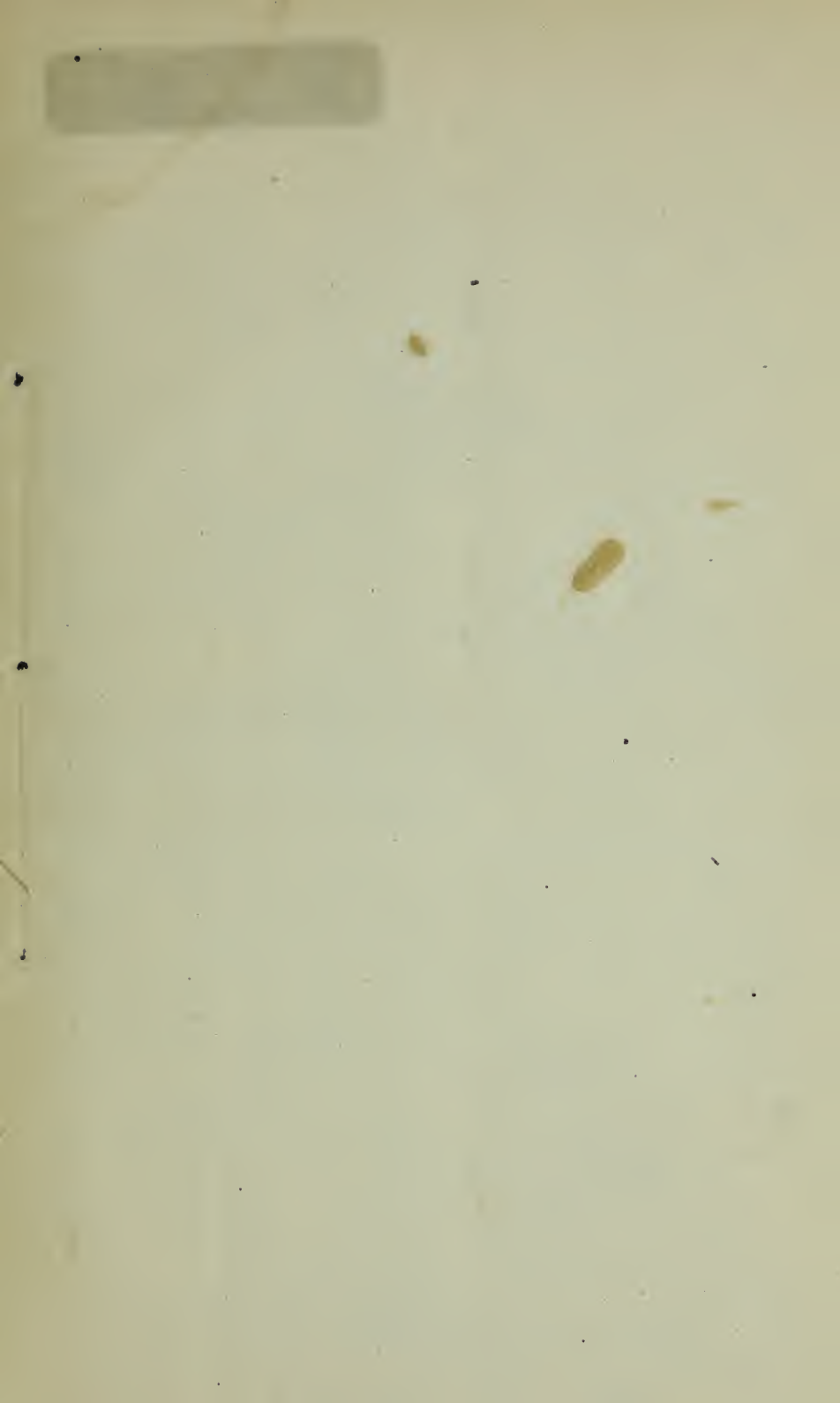
We have confined our remarks to legislation, and have refrained from saying anything in reference to the influence which our business men should exert in the direct administration of the Government. This latter logically comes after the former, for laws must be first made and then executed ; but this is a distinct subject and should be separately treated. It may be said however, that when the commercial class shall exercise its proper influence in Congress, it will soon begin to participate in the management of governmental affairs. It was after RICHARD COBDEN had won his spurs in many a hotly contested debate in the House of Commons, that he was offered a baronetcy and a seat in the Privy Council. At the time referred to, we shall have a Department of Commerce presided over by a cabinet minister, who will be a merchant ; and it will be the rule to select the Secretary of the Treasury and perhaps other heads of departments from among prominent members of the commercial class.

In the United States we are favored with a good government ; but we cannot safely rest contented with the excellence of the fundamental law, on which it is based. We should be satisfied with nothing less than a good government, well

conducted. There is no occasion for our adopting the fallacy of Pope's couplet,

“For forms of Government let fools contest;  
Whate'er is best administered is best.”

Having a form which is theoretically sound, we should seek for the best administration possible under it, for the wisest application of the principles to which we are attached, and for the equitable and universal enforcement of statutes which shall doubly commend themselves to every citizen, because they are in harmony with his own enlightened convictions, as well as with the spirit of the Federal Constitution. To this end, the intelligence, the industry and the property of the country should have fair and full representation in both branches—the legislative and the executive — of the National Government.





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